



Tribal Buffalo Conservation Summit

Bringing Buffalo Back
to Tribal Lands and Cultures

ARTURO
GARCIA

November 1-3, 2018

History Colorado Center, Denver, CO

Bringing Buffalo Back to Tribal Lands and Cultures

WELCOME. This gathering brings together leaders from across a variety of disciplines to showcase management strategies and discuss priorities for bison conservation and restoration.

Objectives

- Bring together tribal leaders, tribal wildlife managers, and conservation partners to share lessons-learned, successes achieved, and tribal management strategies and priorities for bison restoration and conservation.
- Showcase tribal expertise in bison restoration, highlighting the ecological, cultural, and economic benefits.
- Advance bison conservation in the West by expanding existing programs and creating new partnerships for bison conservation.
- Invigorate a network of advocates for tribal bison restoration.

Tribal leaders and cultural and wildlife representatives, bison advocates, governmental leaders, and philanthropists gather to share experiences and strategies to guide future progress toward the ecological restoration of buffalo as well as the contribution of the species to maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem sustainability.



Thursday November 1 *(History Colorado Center – Colorado Room)*

12:30PM / SUMMIT OPENING

- Welcome and Blessing (Rick Williams); Welcome from the History Colorado Center (Steve Turner, Executive Director); Announcements and Introductions

1:15PM / THE CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF BISON RESTORATION/CONSERVATION

Spiritual, religious, ceremonial, cultural use

- Brian Vigil (Jicarilla Apache Tribe); Lorene Willis (Jicarilla Apache Tribe), Todd Leahy (New Mexico Wildlife Federation)

2:15PM / THE ECOLOGY AND GENETICS OF BISON RESTORATION/CONSERVATION

What happens when you put buffalo back on the landscape

- Steve Torbit (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); Glenn Plumb (International Union for Conservation of Nature); Jason Baldes (Eastern Shoshone Tribe and NWF); Kelly Stoner (Wildlife Conservation Society)

3:45PM / SHORT, MIDDLE- AND LONG-TERM PLANNING, MODELS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUFFALO RESTORATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Roles and responsibilities, logistics, staffing, Council oversight

- Robert Magnan (Fort Peck Tribes); President Andy Werk (Fort Belknap Tribes); Jason Baldes (Eastern Shoshone Tribe and NWF); Ervin Carlson (Blackfeet Tribe and ITBC)

4:45PM / SUMMARY, WRAP-UP, ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Rick Williams

5:00PM–6:30PM / RECEPTION

- Hors d'oeuvres and cash bar

Friday November 2 *(History Colorado Center – Colorado Room)*

7:00AM / BREAKFAST *(on own at hotel)*

8:30AM / WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND REFLECTIONS ON DAY 1

- Rick Williams

9:00AM / CEREMONY AND SONG AND YOUTH EDUCATION AND INVESTMENT

- Arnell Abold (Intertribal Buffalo Council); Ramey Growing Thunder, Ethan Three Stars, and Winona Rose Runsabove (Fort Peck Language and Culture Department); Joel Parrott (Oakland Zoo)

10:00AM / BREAK

10:15AM / IDENTIFYING TRIBAL COMMUNITY INTERESTS FOR BUFFALO AND BUILDING TRIBAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

- Jonny Bearcub Stiffarm (Fort Peck Tribes); Monica Terkildsen (World Wildlife Fund); Melissa Berns (Old Harbor Alliance)

11:30AM / LUNCH AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER

- Patty Limerick, University of Colorado Center of the American West

12:30PM / ON-THE-GROUND EFFORTS AND BEST PRACTICES

Buffalo management, fencing, mobile facilities, strategies for expanding bison range

- Robert Magnan (Fort Peck Tribes); Justin Fredrickson (City of Ft. Collins, Soapstone Bison Herd); Damien Austin (American Prairie Reserve); Doc Woerner (Veterinarian and Buffalo Educator)

1:30PM / YELLOWSTONE BISON CONSERVATION AND QUARANTINE PROGRAM

- Tim Reid (Yellowstone National Park); Council Member Grant Stafne (Fort Peck Tribes); Ervin Carlson (Blackfeet Tribe and ITBC); Chamois Andersen (Defenders of Wildlife)

2:30PM / PARTNERSHIPS IN BISON CONSERVATION

Conservation herds, partners and projects

- President Andy Werk (Fort Belknap Tribes); Jason Baldes (Eastern Shoshone Tribe and NWF); Ervin Carlson (Blackfeet Tribe and ITBC); Robert Magnan (Fort Peck Tribes); Chamois Andersen (Defenders of Wildlife); Dennis Jorgensen (World Wildlife Fund); Garrit Voggeser (National Wildlife Federation); Joel Parrott (Oakland Zoo)

4:00PM / REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS *(all attendees)*

4:45PM / SUMMIT SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

- Rick Williams

Saturday November 3 *(Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge – Contact Station)*

9:00AM / BUS LOAD-UP & DEPART HOTEL FOR ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL

10:00AM / NATIONAL BISON DAY AND TRIBAL CULTURAL CELEBRATION

- Speakers; Drum Songs; Food Break; Buffalo Viewing; Honor Song

1:00PM / TRANSPORTATION BACK TO HOTEL

Biographies

ARNELL D. ABOLD, an enrolled member of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) Tribe, is the Executive Director for the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC). She is the first native woman Director to serve for ITBC since its inception in 1992. Ms. Abold previously served as the Fiscal Director for the organization since 2001 and has devoted the majority of her career to the vision and the mission of the organization. Her passion, belief and devotion to the buffalo and the membership tribes that hold the buffalo sacred is what has driven her dedication and loyalty to ITBC.

Prior to ITBC, Arnell worked for the Oglala Sioux Tribe as the Finance Officer to the Treasurer at the Red Cloud Indian School as the Business Manager, and at the American Horse Indian School as their Business Manager. Arnell's educational background consists of a MBA in Business Administration and a MM in Human Resource Management from National American University in Rapid City, South Dakota. She received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration through the University of South Dakota. Throughout her career Ms. Abold has not only gained valuable experience along with insightful knowledge, but she has also learned to be open to continually being willing to learn and grow and to never give up. And it is through the buffalo that her connection to her culture and spirituality became visible.

CHAMOIS ANDERSEN is responsible for advancing Defenders of Wildlife's conservation programs for the Great Plains, with a focus on the American bison and endangered black-footed ferret. Chamois collaborates with conservation partners, advocates for wildlife protections by state and federal agencies, and works in the field on projects to enhance prairie dog habitat and monitor black-footed ferrets. She is also the liaison with Defenders' tribal partners, supporting buffalo conservation programs across the plains and in Yellowstone. Chamois began her career in 1992 as an environmental reporter. She then worked as communications director for the Marine Region of the California Fish and Game Department and for the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Chamois has written numerous agency wildlife conservation plans as well as comments on federal land/resource management plans. Chamois also served Executive Director of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and prior to that role, as communications director for the University of Wyoming's Environment and Natural Resource Program.

DAMIEN AUSTIN is the Operations Manager of the American Prairie Reserve. Damien resides on the Reserve with his family and serves as the lead liaison for APR's bison management as well as working as one of our naturalist guides. Prior to joining APR in 2010, Damien worked as Living Collection Keeper at Zoo Montana in Billings, Montana, and as Research Director at Floating Island international, an invention company specializing in water reclamation. Originally from Billings, Damien grew up with a backyard of sagebrush and grass that looked much like the Reserve. He enjoys living in the familiar prairie ecosystem and appreciates that American Prairie Reserve is a landscape-sized conservation project.

JASON BALDES is a member of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe from the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Land Resource Sciences from Montana State University. Jason's interests have led to work and travel with Indigenous peoples in East Africa, New Zealand, Mexico, Russia and Denmark. Much of his work has been surrounding the restoration of bison to the Wind River Indian Reservation. Jason currently works as a consultant to the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Buffalo Program, Tribal Partnerships Program of the National Wildlife Federation, Montana Conservation Corps and the Wind River Foundation. Jason provides workshops and learning opportunities about Tribal history, water, bison conservation, wildlife/fisheries, and cultural connections with animals through song, story and language. His efforts help people understand the complexities of contemporary issues through an Indigenous lens, bridging cross-cultural gaps, and creating positive relationships with those who wish to understand more about Native American people.

MELISSA BERNIS is a member of the Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor from Old Harbor, Alaska on the southeast side of Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. She grew up in the village where she was raised with a subsistence lifestyle and continues to perpetuate traditional harvesting and cultural arts. Melissa is Herd Manager of the Sitkalidak Bison Herd which is owned by the Old Harbor Alliance Inc., a non-profit organization serving members of the Alutiiq Tribe, shareholders and dependents of the Old Harbor Native Corporation, and residents of the village of Old Harbor. The herd was established in May of 2017 however she began working with a team of Tribal leaders, ranchers, and regional, state and federal agencies in 2015 on the planning process and acquisition of the herd.

Maritime ranching posed many challenges in remote Alaska. The bison first had to be herded to an area accessible by a marine landing craft for transport; all materials for building a corral and catch system had to be brought in by boat; personnel had to come in by water or air and base off of vessels for the duration of the move; and once captured the herd of 40 head had to be transported 20 water miles south to their new home on Sitkalidak Island. Not only was the move a logistical challenge but sharing the benefits of owning a herd with Tribal members, who were newly exposed to bison, posed some complexity and apprehension. By having a transparent plan for herd management, community outreach, and co-existing with bison, it is the hope of the Old Harbor Alliance to have a thriving herd that will provide an alternative meat source for Tribal Members as well as develop economic opportunities that will support our youth and community programs.



ERVIN CARLSON is a member of the Blackfeet Nation in Montana and is the Director of the Blackfeet Buffalo Program and President of the ITBC (Intertribal Buffalo Council). Ervin brings intimate knowledge of bison restoration both from a native perspective and as a cattle rancher. He served on the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council in 2000 – 2004. Ervin was the Agriculture Director for the Blackfeet Tribe in 1996 – 2000 and Montana – Wyoming Indian Stock Growers in 2004 – 2006.

JESTIN DUPREE is a member of the Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation. Prior to his service as a Tribal Council Member, Dupree served as the Tribes' Sergeant-at-Arms.

JUSTIN FREDRICKSON is a Land Manager for the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department. Born and Raised in Colorado, Justin attended Colorado State University and graduated with a degree in Parks and Protected Area Management and has spent the past 5 years managing lands within the Laramie Foothills. Fort Collins Natural Areas has conserved over 35,000 acres of open space and agricultural land including Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, a 23,000 acre working ranch that is home, in part, to the Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd. The LFBCH project is a collaboration between Colorado State University, Larimer County Natural Resources Department and the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department. Justin leads day to day operations on site and works in close partnership with CSU and Larimer County to manage the bison herd at Soapstone.

RAMEY GROWING THUNDER (Ed.D. Candidate, MA Language, Literacy and Sociocultural studies) is an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and was born and raised in Poplar, Montana. She has been teaching in the field of education for 19 years. The Fort Peck Tribes' Language & Culture Department, led by Ramey, a doctoral candidate, strives to increase language revitalization and cultural restoration among Fort Peck's Nakoda and Dakota communities. Under the Department's programs, local youth embrace Nakoda and Dakota cultural ways of knowing, immerse themselves in tribal language, hear elder stories, hear creation stories, understand and perpetuate the Tribes' histories, sing traditional songs, share traditional ways of dance and living, and perpetuate the seven sacred rites of Pté San Win (White Buffalo Calf Woman) and other traditional rites.

The Department's respectful approach addresses the historical accuracy of the people's education, past and present; community-based curriculum development; language revitalization; cultural restoration; and learning strategies for the sake of local children and future generations. The Language & Culture Department conducts youth and family cultural education programs throughout the year, including language instruction and competitions, cultural arts and foods, and traditional life ways.

DENNIS JORGENSEN is the Bison Initiative Coordinator for the World Wildlife Fund and has been a Program Officer in the Northern Great Plains office since 2007. Hired as the program's first field biologist he was based in the northern Montana prairies for 5 years where he gained valuable knowledge of the place, the people, and the wildlife. Before coming to WWF, Dennis worked for 7 years as an environmental consultant for the provincial government and the oil and gas industry in Alberta, Canada. In 2009 Dennis completed his Master's thesis at the University of Calgary studying the migrations of prairie rattlesnakes in Alberta. In 2013, Dennis was elected

Vice-Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) North American Bison Specialist Group and is currently participating in the IUCN Red-List assessment of the status of NA Bison. Dennis has published peer-reviewed research on the migrations of prairie rattlesnakes and long-billed curlews and is involved in research on the migrations of pronghorn and mountain plovers tagged in northern Montana.

BRIAN P. KURZEL is the Regional Executive Director of the National Wildlife Federation's Rocky Mountain Regional Center based in Colorado. He oversees NWF's work on protecting public lands, sustaining fish and wildlife populations, promoting responsible energy development, connecting people to nature and partnering with tribal governments on education and conservation. Brian joined NWF in 2015 after about 10 years with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, where he most recently served as a senior manager focused on policy and planning initiatives. Brian has also served as Colorado's natural areas program manager, overseeing a statewide, science-driven natural resource conservation effort focused on species and habitat protection. He was a scientific consultant for the Colorado State Forest Service, researcher at the University of Colorado-Boulder and has experience in inner-city, school-based and outdoor science education. Brian earned a master's degree in science from CU-Boulder, with concentrations in forest ecology and biogeography, and a Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

PATTY LIMERICK is the Faculty Director and Chair of the Board of the Center of the American West at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she is also a professor of environmental studies and history. In addition, Patty was named to serve as the Colorado State Historian from 2016 to 2018, and appointed to the National Endowment for the Humanities advisory board called The National Council on the Humanities. Patty was nominated by President Obama in Spring 2015 and was confirmed by the United States Senate in November of 2015. She is the author of *Desert Passages*, *The Legacy of Conquest*, *Something in the Soil*, and *A Ditch in Time*. A frequent public speaker and a columnist for *The Denver Post*, Limerick has dedicated her career to bridging the gap between academics and the general public, to demonstrating the benefits of applying historical perspective to contemporary dilemmas and conflicts, and to making the case for humor as an essential asset of the humanities. A recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship and the Hazel Barnes Prize (the University of Colorado's highest award for teaching and research), she has served as president of the American Studies Association, the Western History Association, the Society of American Historians, and the Organization of American Historians, as well as the vice president for teaching of the American Historical Association. She received her B.A. from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and her Ph.D. from Yale University.

ROBBIE MAGNAN is the Director of Fort Peck Tribes' Fish and Wildlife Department. He leads efforts to conserve and restore Yellowstone bison at Fort Peck and is working to develop a bison program that is financially, culturally, and ecologically sustainable. In the long run, Robbie hopes that their Tribal buffalo program can share Yellowstone buffalo with all Tribes by hosting North America's first Tribal quarantine facility for Yellowstone bison at Fort Peck.

JOEL PARROTT, DVM, President, CEO and Staff Veterinarian of the Oakland Zoo. Received BS and DVM degrees from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. Born in the Adirondack region of New York State, Dr. Parrott spent his high school years in Miami, Florida before moving to Colorado for his college education. Upon graduation from veterinary school, he completed an internship at the Denver Zoo and then went into private practice in Castro Valley, California. His specialty was exotic animals and he was a consulting veterinarian for the Oakland Zoo until 1984, when he became the Staff Veterinarian and Assistant Director. A year later, he became the Executive Director at the Zoo. In 2012, his title changed to President, CEO. Dr. Parrott has overseen many, new developments at the Zoo in the past thirty-four years. An avid conservationist and naturalist, he views the role of zoos as instrumental to environmental education.

GLENN PLUMB received degrees from West Virginia University (BS Forestry 1980), Texas Tech University (MS Range Management 1984), and the University of Wyoming (PhD Range Management 1991). During the 1980s he managed and researched cattle and bison in West-Texas and South Dakota. From 1989-1993, he served as faculty and staff scientist at the University of Wyoming. He then joined the National Park Service as a Wildlife Biologist at Badlands NP, and also served as Supervisory Wildlife Biologist and Chief of Natural Resources at Yellowstone National Park 1998-2010, and recently retired as the NPS Chief Wildlife Biologist 2010-2017. He currently serves as Chair of the Bison Specialist Group, of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

JONATHAN PROCTOR joined Defenders of Wildlife in 2005. As the Rockies and Plains Program Director, he directs Defenders' work in these two regions and oversees the field staff in Montana and Colorado. Jonathan has worked in wildlife and wilderness conservation since 1990. Prior to joining Defenders, he worked as a wilderness ranger with the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon and Montana from 1990 to 1997, and for Predator Conservation Alliance in Montana and Colorado from 1997 to 2005. He joined Defenders in 2005 and opened a new field office in Denver to focus on Southern Rockies and Great Plains wildlife. In 2008 he moved to our Missoula field office to focus on grizzly bears, bison, black-footed ferrets and other species conservation efforts in the Northern Rockies and Plains. In 2013 Jonathan moved back to Denver to open a new Rockies and Plains office and to expand Defenders' work throughout these two regions. Jonathan is a co-founder and former coordinator of the Northern Plains Conservation Network, a coalition of conservation organizations and tribes working to restore of the region's natural heritage. He is also a co-founder and advisory board member of the Prairie Dog Coalition, a project of the Humane Society of the United States. He is co-author of Ocean of Grass, an ecoregion assessment of the Northern Great Plains, as well as four publications on prairie dogs. Jonathan received a B.A. in Geography from Wittenberg University and a M.S. in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana.

WINONA ROSE RUNSABOVE (Nakoda Instructor/Researcher) is an enrolled member of the Só'taeo'o (Northern Cheyenne), and also descends from the Titunwanj (Lakota), Hudeshana (Red Bottom) Nakoda and Sisonwanj Dakota. She is the Nakoda Instructor/Researcher with the Fort Peck Tribal Language & Culture Department. She is a Class 7 certified Nakoda Language Educator in the state of Montana. Her goal in Language and Cultural Education is to help her relatives learn who they are and where they come from by teaching their cultural values, sacred rites and sharing stories from elders and relatives. She aspires to earn her Bachelor's Degree in Education and continue her work with the Nakoda Language and Culture.

GRANT STAFNE is a member of the Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation. Prior to his service on the Fort Peck Tribal Council, Mr. Stafne was Bureau of Indian Affairs Deputy Superintendent of Trust Services for Fort Peck and also served as the Director of the Tribes' land buy-back program.

JONNY BEARCUB STIFFARM, in 2016, came out of semi-retirement and joined the WWF team as a contractor to serve as a Buffalo Program Administrator. Working with the Ft. Peck Tribes Fish & Wildlife Department & the Pte' Group, she takes their ideas, guidance, experiences and develops policy, infrastructure, and educational activities with numerous entities. All focused toward the goal of a sustainable bison herd for future generations. Her career path includes public service serving as a tribal councilmember, appointee of Mayor Webb for City & County of Denver as Deputy Director of Contract Compliance and in private industry as Director of Business Development for NativeEnergy, Inc. She holds a Juris Doctorate from the Univ. of Minnesota School of Law and Bachelor of Sciences from Brigham Young University. Contact her at jbearcub@fpcc.edu.

MONICA TERKILDSEN is a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe based in Wanblee (Lakota word for Eagle), South Dakota, the far northeast end of Pine Ridge. She joined World Wildlife Fund as the Tribal Community Liaison in February 2017 to lead outreach efforts on Pine Ridge regarding the South Unit of Badlands National Park. Monica meets with community members, tribal leaders, government officials, ranching interests, landowners, businesses and others to understand their desires and concerns for the area. Previously, Monica worked for the Oglala Sioux Parks & Recreation Authority where she oversaw the completion of the General Management Plan for the South Unit which called for establishing a Tribal National Park and restoring bison. Monica has re-started conversations about the South Unit and is building a coalition of local leaders/champions to support improved management by establishing a declaration of priorities of the South Unit – whether the Tribal National Park, or other tribal priorities with NPS. She also works with the Rosebud community in connecting the community to conservation. Monica is a member of the sustainable financing initiative that is working to ensure the sustainability of tribal wildlife conservation for current and future generations by creating sustainable financing, engaging local communities and leadership, and connecting conservation with culture.

ETHAN THREE STARS (Dak'hóta Language Instructor/Researcher) is Dak'hóta, Lak'hóta, and Hidatsa. He comes from a small community called Fort Kipp on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Northeastern Montana. He graduated from Poplar High School in 2016 and is currently attending the Fort Peck Community College. He is 20 years old and obtained a Class 7 teaching license when he was 18 years old in 2016 making him the youngest person in the state of Montana to receive a Class 7 teaching license. He has taught the Dak'hóta language in the Poplar High School from 2017-2018 and currently works at the Fort Peck Tribes Language and Culture Department as a Dak'hóta Language Instructor/Researcher. He aspires to earn his Bachelor's Degree in Education and continue work with the Dak'hóta Language and Culture.

KELLY STONER leads the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bison Program in its effort to restore wild, free-ranging bison to tribal lands in the American West. Kelly's expertise includes human-wildlife conflict, applied conservation research, strategic communication, and organizational efficiency, and her work has taken her to Tanzania, Botswana, and Namibia. Kelly completed her Master of Environmental Science at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, and her Bachelor of Arts in Communication at Villanova University. From 2011 to 2012 Kelly held a Fulbright Fellowship, and she has been honored with awards from the National Science Foundation, Villanova University, and the Philadelphia Zoo. Kelly was a member of the 2015 – 2016 class of the Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders program.

STEPHEN C. TORBIT has a diverse educational and work history. Dr. Torbit earned his Ph.D. in wildlife ecology from Colorado State University specializing in ungulate nutritional ecology. Since earning his doctorate, Steve has worked in every aspect of wildlife conservation. He not only has been an academician, by continuing on the faculty of Colorado State as an instructor and researcher, but he has also worked as a biologist for two state wildlife agencies (Colorado and Wyoming), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and helped lead the first reintroduction of black-footed ferrets to the wild in Shirley Basin. In 1993, Steve brought his research, agency and management experience to bear on wildlife conservation issues in the west for the National Wildlife Federation focusing on Public and Tribal Lands conservation. In 2011, Steve returned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the Assistant Regional Director for Science Applications. Steve has brought national science funding to increase understanding of key aspects Greater Sage-grouse conservation and wolverine habitat requirements. Steve also continues to assist the region in outreach to Native American Tribes seeking their collaboration on conservation issues of mutual interest.

BRYAN F. VIGIL is a life-long learner of the Jicarilla Apache customs and traditions. During his lifetime, he has many Jicarilla Apache mentors/teachers who have shared their knowledge of traditional values, crafts, plants and life ways. He served in the military as a Marine and uses much of his commitment and dedication to fulfilling on his promises to the demanding discipline of military life. He has given numerous presentations on Apache lifeways to the school, at conferences and at tribal consultation meetings. He is also considered a healer by many of the people in Dulce.

GARRIT VOGGESSER is the National Director of the National Wildlife Federation's Tribal Partnerships Program. Garrit has worked for NWF for fourteen years, engaging tribes nation-wide on a wide array of wildlife and habitat conservation issues, particularly western water issues, bison conservation, protecting tribal resources from energy extraction, ensuring equity for tribes in federal natural resource legislation and appropriations, and providing environmental education and outdoor opportunities for tribal youth. Prior to his current tenure, Garrit served as NWF's bison coordinator and as a tribal conservation consultant. Garrit received a Ph.D. in American Indian and environmental history from the University of Oklahoma in 2004.

ANDREW "ANDY" WERK JR. is President of the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Montana. Werk is also a former three-term member of the Fort Belknap Tribal Council.

RICHARD B. WILLIAMS (Oglala Lakota/Northern Cheyenne) is a passionate and committed advocate and fierce champion of Native education in the United States. From 1997-2012, he served as president and CEO of the American Indian College Fund, a national non-profit scholarship fundraising organization for American Indian students attending tribal colleges and universities which provide culturally based education and are run by the tribes. Williams was the first American Indian to graduate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, receiving a B.A. (magna cum laude) in 1975. Concurrently, he finished an independent study program at the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) in Boulder, Colorado, where he continued his work as a paralegal after graduation. In 1987, Williams completed a M.A. in educational administration (Summa Cum Laude) at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. Rick has always been interested and an advocate for the buffalo.

LORENE WILLIS served as the Jicarilla Apache Cultural Affairs Director until 2010 when she retired. She served 10 years. Prior to that she was Assistant Controller for the Nation. Committed to the transformation of the Dulce community, Lorene has served on many Boards, Associations and Regents during her lifetime. The most notable are the Chairman of the Board of Regents for Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, President of the National Indian Education Association and President of the Confederation of Indigenous Elders and Priests of America. As Director of the Cultural Affairs Office, she initiated several projects that still exist today: The Tribal Historic Preservation Office, the Language Certification and Licensing Process, Teachers in the Elementary School and seasonal culture camps for young men and women from the community. She received her Bachelors of Science in Business Management and attended the Executive Master of Business Administration at the University of New Mexico.

DON "DOC" WOERNER, DVM, has been a veterinarian and business owner in the Billings/Laurel area of Montana since 1968. Through the years, all things relating to the American buffalo has held his special passion and has provided endless and ongoing subject matter for personal study. Operations of his animal-related businesses have now been delegated to younger veterinarians and other qualified individuals. Doc has worked extensively with bison and "bison people" in both commercial and conservation settings. The future looks bright for the many relationships surrounding our magnificent National Mammal.

Buffalo Conservation Examples

BOY-ZSHAN BI-DEN (BUFFALO RETURN) – EASTERN SHOSHONE TRIBE

Imagine over 1,000 wild buffalo roaming on hundreds of thousands of acres on the Wind River Reservation. Imagine these buffalo as a free-ranging herd on tribal lands – reviving tribal culture and reinvesting in the tribal communities' connections to nature. That is the vision of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and their partner, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). The tribe also believes that tens of thousands of buffalo can be restored to millions of acres of tribal lands in the next generation, and the Eastern Shoshone Tribe not only wants to bring buffalo back to Wind River but also in the future serve as resource to help other tribes restore buffalo. They believe restoring a sizable herd on Wind River is a significant step towards achieving this grander vision for tribes across the West. For the last decade, the Eastern Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming has partnered with NWF to bring buffalo back to their lands, an effort called Boy-zshan Bi-den (Buffalo Return in the Shoshone language).

The Wind River Reservation has 2.4 million acres, much of which is prime buffalo habitat. In fact, the Reservation has more buffalo habitat for free-ranging buffalo than currently exists in Yellowstone National Park. Investing in bringing buffalo back to tribal lands on the Wind River Reservation is helping to heal historic environmental and societal wounds from the absence of buffalo, revive tribal cultural and ecological connections to buffalo, and contribute to Native community health and economies.

The Shoshone have successfully recovered all of the large species – such as deer, bighorn sheep, moose, and pronghorn – to their lands that were decimated by settlement, unregulated hunting, and other factors in the 19th and 20th centuries. Buffalo remain the one large ungulate species to be fully restored to their homelands. By bringing buffalo back to Wind River, we will revitalize a landscape, a habitat, and a diversity of wildlife while also re-establishing Native Americans' cultural and historic connections to wildlife and the land. Buffalo restoration will ultimately foster a new conservation economy for Wind River – creating a nexus between cultural and historical revival and community vibrancy – that will help to alleviate some of the economic and social challenges that have faced the Tribes for decades.

In the last two years, the Shoshone Tribe and NWF returned buffalo after 130 years of absence, restoring 20 buffalo. The herd has also had three calves. The Shoshone Tribe is also exploring the concept of an ecotourism program and Visitor's Center to attract tourists on their way to Yellowstone. This Center could offer varied educational and experiential programming for tribal youth, tribal members, and the general public that would also help to heal some of the economic disparities facing their tribal community.

The Eastern Shoshone Tribe is currently working to finalize a Shoshone Buffalo Management Plan that sets the near-term objectives and long term vision for the tribe's buffalo program. They have identified multiple reservation locations, ranging from 15,000 to 50,000 acres, to expand bison habitat and restore more buffalo.



FORT BELKNAP INDIAN RESERVATION – THE A'ANININ AND THE NAKODA TRIBES

The A'aninin and the Nakoda tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation have been restoring buffalo to their lands for more than four decades. It began in 1977 with the Assiniboine (Nakoda) Treaty Committee transferring ownership of 31 buffalo to the Fort Belknap Tribal Council, marking the first re-introduction of buffalo to the Fort Belknap Reservation. The herd was named after the place it calls home at the base of Snake Butte, a spiritual place on the northern portion of the reservation. By 1996, the Snake Butte Herd had grown to 280 animals and was supporting an annual hunting program. Since then, Fort Belknap has created a buffalo program that today involves restoring Yellowstone wild bison to their lands. This conservation herd began in 2013 with an agreement that Defenders of Wildlife helped broker with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks that led to 34 Yellowstone buffalo being translocated from the Fort Peck Indian Reservation to Fort Belknap. This was the second round of genetically pure wild bison from Yellowstone National Park to be restored to tribal lands on the Northern Plains. The elders of Fort Belknap, who have long paid homage to the animal, can once again receive its blessings while also giving back to the buffalo, providing them with their historic range on these tribal lands.

Recent restoration efforts for the Yellowstone herd include purchasing an adjacent property for expanding the buffalo reserve to accommodate more animals, which numbers 67, including calves born last spring-summer. Defenders of Wildlife provided funding to support this land acquisition by Fort Belknap. Long term plans include increasing the size of the Yellowstone herd and combining those animals with the Snake Butte Herd. A major component of this strategy is the ability to secure more land to then grow the herd. Connecting lands for the buffalo to migrate to seasonal habitats—winter and calving grounds—will ensure the herd can remain sustainable and continue to provide for the tribal community well into the future. This past year, a Fort Belknap buffalo stakeholder group was established and recently completed a survey of tribal members to better understand their values, needs, and aspirations for the restoration of buffalo at Fort Belknap. World Wildlife Fund was also instrumental for this survey. The results will be analyzed and shared with community members and leaders in the coming months. It is hoped that the survey will provide additional incentives for ways in which buffalo management and restoration can be better aligned with the desires of community members.

As Fort Belknap continues to work on bringing back the buffalo, tribal youth are now growing up also appreciating this member of their family that was gone for so many years. They are also learning in school what conservation of buffalo means, along with the ecological roles of other native wildlife to the prairie grasslands. Tribal traditions also now continue in honor of the buffalo. Many community members of Fort Belknap share in sun dances in appreciation of Mother Earth and the buffalo. Bronc Speak Thunder, known as the bison wrangler at Fort Belknap, says their buffalo program is about the community and he pays special attention to engaging their youth. "A lot of younger folks are searching, seeking out interesting experiences," he said. "There are many kids who just want to ride with me some days and help out on the buffalo reserve, with fencing and weeds. It's important to have them be part of our buffalo efforts."





THE PATH BACK – FORT PECK ASSINIBOINE AND SIOUX TRIBES BUFFALO RESTORATION EFFORTS

In the year 2000, after nearly 120 years without buffalo, Fort Peck Tribes purchased one hundred buffalo from Fort Belknap Indian Community and welcomed their relatives' home to the Turtle Mound Buffalo Ranch. Robbie Magnan, the current Fort Peck Fish & Wildlife Director, has led the buffalo program for many years and has established a strong vision for a program that served the buffalo and the people. In 2008, the Tribes split the bison into two herds, a business herd for the sale of hunts, and a cultural herd to provide for community needs. By 2010 the Fort Peck Buffalo Program was donating at least 25 buffalo annually to cultural and community institutions and events. In 2012, the Fort Peck Tribes, with support from Defenders of Wildlife and National Wildlife Federation, secured their first herd of 69 Yellowstone bison, 36 of which were sent to Fort Belknap in 2013 to establish their own Yellowstone herd on the 1,000-acre People's Creek pasture. In 2014 the Yellowstone herd was supplemented with another 136 bison that were held by Ted Turner and allocated by the State of Montana. These Yellowstone bison would establish the new Fort Peck cultural herd, grazing approximately 12,000 acres and currently numbering over 400 bison, while the business herd grazes 13,000 additional acres and numbers over 300 animals.

The two distinct herds continue to serve separate purposes of: 1) generating revenue to support the buffalo program through non-tribal hunts and meat sales (business herd), and 2) providing for tribal member hunts, community sustenance, and tribal member and tourist education and visitation (cultural herd). In the fall of 2015 Fort Peck completed a 320-acre surveillance facility for holding and testing Yellowstone bison for full operational quarantine within the existing Yellowstone pasture. Unfortunately, that facility is not yet in use, but after seemingly endless dealings with state and federal agencies and leaders, Fort Peck may soon have a Memorandum of Agreement completed so that they can play a role in full quarantine. Fort Peck has already provided 8 Yellowstone bison to the Bronx Zoo to establish a breeding population and will send Yellowstone bulls to Fort Belknap, Rosebud, and Wind River Reservations in the fall of 2018 to assist in tribal efforts to restore bison to Indian Country.

In 2015 the Fort Peck Pte (female buffalo) stakeholder group made up of wildlife managers, elders, educators, tribal executive members, and community members partnered with Montana State University and World Wildlife Fund to host the Fort Peck Buffalo Summit and Treaty meeting, which saw over 1,000 Fort Peck school children visit the Turtle Mound Buffalo Ranch and learn about their connection to buffalo from elders, teachers, veterinarians, and biologists. For many it was their first trip to the buffalo pastures. The same year the Pte Group, MSU and WWF conducted a survey of nearly 300 tribal members to better understand their values, needs, and aspirations for the management and restoration of bison at Fort Peck.

Since the completion of that survey Fort Peck has implemented numerous recommendations emerging from the survey including hiring a part-time buffalo program administrator Jonny BearCub Stiffarm, implementing affordable buffalo meat sales, developing forms and protocols for tribal member hunts, selling meat to tribal early childhood and health promotion programs, gifting school children buffalo themed coloring books, and increasing communication to community members concerning the buffalo programs activities using social media and two local newspapers. All these activities have garnered increasing awareness and benefit among community members and increasing support among leaders over the past few years.

In 2017, Fort Peck began working with Off the Beaten Path Tour Company and World Wildlife Fund to provide eco-tours including sharing the buffalo culture, an arts and crafts sale, traditional stories, time spent with the buffalo, dinner on the prairie and traditional songs including drums and round dancing. Fort Peck Tribes Head Start Early Childhood Development Program has worked with Montana State University to develop a first of its kind buffalo curriculum, which will foster the connection of children on the reservation to the buffalo and has the potential for future use beyond Fort Peck in early childhood education. A training with Head Start teachers to launch the curriculum recently took place at Fort Peck and the Pte (buffalo) Stakeholder Group hopes that in the future they can facilitate the development of buffalo curriculum for use in K-12 education at Fort Peck to reinforce the important traditional and contemporary connection to buffalo.

The Fort Peck Buffalo Program has diversified its business program by developing online license sales for non-tribal hunters that includes a lottery for non-trophy hunts and bidding for trophy hunts. In addition, they are in the process of partnering with Wild Idea Buffalo Company and Native American Natural Foods to sell surplus bison and secure state-inspected bison meat for affordable sales to community members. The Fort Peck Buffalo program has demonstrated measurable improvement in delivering on the needs and desires of their tribal community members and are taking great strides toward a culturally, economically, and ecologically sustainable tribal buffalo program with meaningful connections to the people of Fort Peck.



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Buffalo Into the Future...

*"Buffalo were the real trailmakers – trails you wouldn't believe.
They were as good as the best civil engineers. It remains true today."*

~David Love

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